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ICP REGIONAL COORDINATORS' MEETING
ICP Asia Pacific: Regional Report
(March 7-11, 2005)
Washington, D.C., U.S.A

I. Introduction

This report covers accomplishments of ICP Asia Pacific since the last Regional Coordinators' Meeting held in Washington, D.C. on 27 September to 1 October 2004.

II. Recent Developments

- The Regional Office (RO) assisted the participating countries in the conduct of in-country training for their price collectors for ICP price surveys and ToolPack. This training was conducted in eighteen (18) countries namely: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Sri Lanka; Taipei,China; Thailand; & Vietnam. The Global Office (GO) assisted in the ToolPack training for China and the Philippines, while the Australian Bureau of Statistics also provided China additional training on the conduct of ICP price surveys in rural areas.

- The consultant for ICP Asia Pacific reviewed the sampling plans submitted by the countries and comments were sent to them as bases for further improvement of their price surveys. A few countries accordingly revised their sampling plans and re-submitted these to the RO.

- A *"Field Officers' Manual for Price Collection"* was prepared by the ICP Asia Pacific consultant based on the 2004 ICP Manual and papers by John Austin. The manual contains notes for supervisors on how to get started with the price surveys; conduct surveys; and data requirements for ICP. It also addresses the needs of price collectors on how to get started/conduct the price surveys and features a "Situation and Response Sheet" which guides the price collectors on courses of action for anticipated problems in the field. This was used as training material for the in-country training of price collectors.

III. Status of ICP Price Surveys in the Asia Pacific Region

Starting Dates of ICP Price Surveys

- With the exception of India and Sri Lanka, all participating countries in the region have started their surveys as of January. Bhutan and India conducted pilot surveys in December while Iran started as early as October 2004, the original starting date for ICP Price Surveys. The tsunami calamity delayed survey operations in India as surveys were only expected to start in the second half of February although they conducted a pilot survey in December 2004. Sri Lanka is starting in the second half of March because many of its Statistical Officers are assisting in the tsunami-affected areas. Bhutan and Cambodia have inputted their price data using PCM and are ready to submit their price data for the first survey round but they are unable to send them to the RO as the ToolPack data

transfer facility from the countries to the RO is not yet available. (Please refer to Table 1.)

Frequency of ICP Price Surveys

- The survey frequency ranges from bi-weekly to quarterly surveys in a few countries. It must be noted that all the countries include their capital cities in the surveys. The table below shows the frequency of surveys for all countries in ICP Asia Pacific.

Weekly/Monthly surveys	Cambodia; People's Republic of China; Fiji: Hong Kong, China; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Singapore; Taipei,China; Thailand; Vietnam & Macao
Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly surveys	Bhutan; India; Iran; Maldives; Mongolia; Pakistan; Sri Lanka: Brunei
Quarterly surveys	Bangladesh; Indonesia; Nepal; Philippines

Coverage of ICP Price Surveys

- All ICP Price Surveys in the Asia Pacific region are conducted nationwide with urban/rural dimension in the countries and all capital cities are covered.

Level of details for the submission of price data

- The Third Regional Advisory Board Meeting of ICP Asia Pacific discussed the level of detail that the countries would be requested to send to the regional coordinator. It was agreed during the RAB meeting that countries would be requested to submit individual prices, except when one or only two quotations are available, to preserve confidentiality. The meeting also recognized that submission of average prices would eliminate the possibility of matching locations and outlets, which are useful for poverty studies. However, confirmation from the countries is yet to be received.

IV. Level of GDP Participation

- At the onset of ICP 2005, participating countries in the Asia Pacific Region were divided into two groups based on their level of GDP participation. A number of countries were to participate for the Final Consumption of Households only, owing to the stage of development the countries are in with respect to the compilation of their national accounts. Group 1 – Full GDP Participation: Bangladesh; Fiji; Hong Kong; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal: Pakistan; PRC; Philippines; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Taipei; Thailand & Vietnam. Group 2 – Final Consumption of Households: Bhutan; Cambodia; Lao PDR; & Maldives.

- The recently held National Accounts workshop, however, showed the capability of almost all participating countries in providing the required weights for the 155

BHs, for the full GDP comparison. To fulfill these requirements, a few countries will be requiring technical assistance and advice from the ICP Asia Pacific Regional Office.

V. Ring List Product List Workshop

- The GO held the ring list workshop for Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; Philippines and Sri Lanka from 31 January to 11 February 2005 at the ADB HQ. Participating countries were concerned on the frequency of the surveys and funding due to the number of products covered. They were informed that the ring list price survey would just be a one-time survey in the capital city.

VI. National Accounts Workshop

- The National Accounts workshop was conducted on 15-17 February 2005 in AIT, Bangkok, led by Mr. Derek Blades, ICP Asia Pacific consultant. The workshop aimed to provide guidance on estimating expenditure weights for the Basic Headings and to exchange information and experience among the participants. Pakistan, however, was unable to attend the workshop.

- Seventeen countries were able to give preliminary GDP weights for private final consumption expenditures based on latest data available.

- Countries that are still using the 1968 SNA should review the extension of the asset boundary by the reclassification of outlays on dual-purpose military assets, software and mineral exploration from intermediate consumption to gross fixed capital formation and if these are found to be significant, countries should adopt the 1993 recommendations both in their official national accounts and in the expenditure weights to be used for ICP2005.

- Countries have to look into a number of items (e.g. own consumption of crops and livestock products, smuggled goods, etc.) that needs to be included in the national accounts in order to ensure that all the participating countries' GDPs are broadly comparable.

- The 155 Basic Headings of the *ICP Expenditure Classification* are to be used without modification by all countries in Asia Pacific. Regions may, however, create new BHs by splitting up BHs that contain goods or services of particular importance to certain Regions. This could improve the quality of the PPP comparisons made for the particular Region.

- A number of methods were discussed and agreed upon on how to fill up data gaps/disaggregate data into the required BHs.

VII. Comments on the SPDs for Pharmaceuticals and Education from the Participating Countries

- In cooperation with the Global Office, The RO has sent the education SPDs and revised pharmaceutical SPDs for comments by the participating countries.

Three countries have submitted their comments on the education SPDs while only two countries have sent their comments on the revised Pharmaceutical SPDs. Please refer to Table 2 for the summary of the comments on the Education SPDs.

VIII. Installation and Use of Toolpack

- The GO funded the purchase of 26 CPUs that were given to 17 countries. Each CPU was installed with the appropriate OS and thoroughly tested with ToolPack version 1.1 before distribution. As most of the countries are unable to provide computers adequate for ToolPack requirements, ToolPack is installed only in the computers provided by the RO.

- The GO has sent ToolPack version 1.2 without the manual. The ADB ICP staff tested the new version but still found some bugs and which have been accordingly communicated to the GO. In addition, as the Manual was only received last week and the RO needs to study it and prepare the necessary templates and documents before sending them to the countries, the RO is not yet in a position to send ToolPack 1.2 to the countries.

- In this regard, **an urgent request is being raised on the need for training for the ADB staff on the use of version 1.2, especially on data validation procedures and data analysis**. We also strongly recommend additional training to the countries as version 1.2 is not as easy to use as originally envisaged and some countries have limited IT knowledge. A number of countries have finished the first round of their surveys and should be ready to submit their data to the RO using the data transfer facility in version 1.2.

- More direction is requested from the GO for data validation to ensure that all the regions adopt the same data validation procedures in ToolPack. A detailed step-by-step guide, in addition to Chapter 7 of the ICP Handbook, is strongly recommended.

- Many countries have indicated that they will definitely not be using PCM ToolPack for data entry. They will be using their CPI systems/other data entry formats for inputting price data especially in countries where the overlap between the CPI and ICP lists is substantial. These countries include: Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; Taipei,China; Thailand; Vietnam; Brunei; Iran; and Macao. The RO needs to introduce the Batch Utility program to the countries and wait for their feedback.

- The ADB ICP staff took advantage of the opportunity during the two recently held workshops for the Ring List preparation in ADB HQ (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka) and National Accounts workshop in Bangkok (Brunei and Iran) to introduce ToolPack 1.2.

Table 1. ICP Asia Pacific Status of ICP Price Surveys (March 4, 2005)

Country	Scope of ICP Price Surveys	Frequency of Price Surveys	Starting Date of Price Surveys	Total Number of Items Surveyed	No. of Computers with ToolPack
Bangladesh	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Quarterly	14-Dec	515	2
Bhutan	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly for food/quarterly for other items	December 2004		
Cambodia	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	January	463	2
China	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	January	594	
Fiji	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	January		1
Hong Kong	National coverage	Bi-weekly/monthly	3-Jan	528	1
India	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly/quarterly	Conducted pilot survey in December 2004; Regular surveys expected to start 2nd half of February due to tsunami calamity.		
Indonesia	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Quarterly	Late January	286	
Lao PDR	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	January		
Malaysia	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	3rd wk Jan	573	2
Maldives	Main Island and 5 other islands	Monthly/quarterly	January		
Mongolia	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly/quarterly	20-Jan	212	
Nepal	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Quarterly	26-Jan		2
Pakistan	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Weekly/quarterly	January	231	2
Philippines	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Quarterly	January	614	1
Singapore	National coverage	Monthly	January		
Sri Lanka	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Weekly/quarterly	2nd half of March (Statistical Officers are assisting in the tsunami-affected areas.)	190	2
Taipei,China		Monthly	January	417	1
Thailand	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Weekly/monthly	January	116	2
Vietnam	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Bi-weekly/monthly	25-Jan	582	24 (4 in HQ/20 regions)
Brunei	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly/Quarterly	Jan (FCF)/Mar (Others)	346	1
Iran	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Quarterly in rural areas/more frequent in urban areas	Oct 2004(FCF)/Jan (Others)	463	
Macao	National coverage with rural/urban outlets	Monthly	January	486	1

Table 2. Comments on the Education SPDs

ICP Heading	Additional Price-determining Factors Suggested/Comments
Pre-primary & primary education	Age of child; membership in the institution; level
Secondary education	Level
Tertiary education	Resident or not/origin; 3 or 4 year degree; principal subject
Other education programs	Specific language level; duration of lessons
Day care and early childhood care	Specify the type of staff (e.g. trained nurses, general staff, etc.)
Music Course	Specify musical instrument; duration of lessons; add music theories as an option
Education SPDs in general	Quantity/packaging and Seasonal availability are irrelevant for education. It is not certain how “Number of children in family enrolled” relates to pricing. It is difficult to obtain information from the price surveys for “Reliability of service”.